

# Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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March 18, 2011

Called to order at 9:10 am on Friday, at ADFG Rabbit Creek Rifle Range in Anchorage, and adjourned at 4:00 pm. Twelve of thirteen members were present, a quorum was established.

## AGENDA ITEMS:

- 1.) Continuing Business
- 2.) Old Business

## WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS:

- 1.) The KRSMWG would like to see more information regarding the quality of escapement at weir projects.
- 2.) State and federal agencies will give information regarding the implementation of a system for reporting of salmon (all species) shipped out of the Kuskokwim Area
- 3.) Listing Bethel Test Fish data on the fish counts webpage on the ADF&G website. Members requested a link to this site to access the updates *daily*. BTF is not currently on the webpage, and the KRSMWG has requested to add it.
- 4.) Discuss the Iyana Gusty award at a future meeting.

## MEETING ACTION ANNOUNCEMENT:

The next KRSMWG meeting will be on Tuesday, May 3, at 10:00 am at ADF&G in Bethel.

## ADF&G COMMERCIAL FISHING OUTLOOK:

- Chuck Brazil stated that commercial fishing could be delayed to as late as the first week of July. If commercial fishing is implemented, the estimated surplus for potential incidental harvest of Chinook is 0 to 10,000. (There has not been a directed commercial fishery for Chinook salmon in the Kuskokwim River since 1987.) The outlook for Chum salmon is an estimated surplus of 200,000 to 300,000; for sockeye 20,000-30,000; and for Coho 60,000 to 150,000.
- Commercial fishing will be delayed so that subsistence needs can be met, and BTF data has to be evaluated daily to determine when a commercial fishery will be implemented.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD: none

AGENDA ITEMS: OLD BUSINESS: none

## AGENDA ITEMS: CONTINUING BUSINESS:

- 1.) **SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:** N/A

## **2.) OVERVIEW OF KUSKOKWIM RIVER SALMON RUN ASSESSMENT**

**PROJECTS:** N/A

**3.) COMMERCIAL CATCH REPORT:** N/A

**4.) PROCESSOR REPORT:** none

**5.) SPORT FISH REPORT:** N/A

**6.) WEATHER FORECAST:** N/A

## **7.) ADF&G FISHING RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Yukon River Delta National Wildlife Refuge cooperatively manage Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon subsistence fisheries. In 2010 the Kwethluk and Tuluksak rivers did not achieve escapement goals for the third and fourth consecutive years, respectively. The Kisaralik River had the lowest aerial index count ever recorded at 235 Chinook salmon, which was the first documented year that the Kisaralik did not meet the lower end of the established Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG). The 2010 total in-river return of Chinook salmon to the Kuskokwim River was the lowest on record. The current outlook for 2011 is expected to be similar to 2010 and there is a joint concern from USFWS and ADF&G that some form of preseason management action is required for conservation of Chinook salmon in lower Kuskokwim River tributaries.
- ADF&G facilitated the *2011 Chinook Salmon Pre-Season Management Options Open Discussion* at the March 17 Interagency meeting. The goal of the open discussion was to review data and determine if conservation efforts were warranted, and to solicit ideas from the group on how to conserve stocks. ADF&G presented notes from this discussion at the March 18 KRSMWG meeting:
  - In-season subsistence harvest monitoring does an excellent job of informing whether or not people are meeting needs (subsistence opportunity), but unfortunately does not appear to be a good index of run strength.
  - BTF is a good predictor of weir escapement. Whether or not escapement needs will be met in 2011 may be assessed as early as June 11. Weirs are the best indicator, but assessments can't be made using weirs until after approximately 50% of the run has passed, which is too late. Mark-recapture and aerial surveys are only available for post-season assessment.
  - Management options are limited to regulating harvest (when, where, and types of gear used in harvest). Subsistence use is priority, and by law, sport fish and commercial closures will precede any subsistence closures.
  - Gaps in data brought up at the interagency meeting:
    - Run timing information specific to lower river
    - When subsistence harvest takes place for specific stocks
    - Uncertainty in stock recruitment analysis
    - Do not have whole river (mainstem) escapement goal (so can't put into context of whole river escapement needs)
    - Don't have documentation of fish shipped out of Kuskokwim
    - Uncertainty in level of customary trade

- Uncertain about decline of other species (i.e. Blackfish).
  - Need to weigh options: No action means increased potential for meeting subsistence goals but potential for not achieving lower river escapement goals. Taking action means reduced potential to meet subsistence goals but increased potential of conserving stocks.
  - Recognize a likely shift in fishing areas with closures.
  - For lower river tributaries, the general consensus at the interagency meeting was that there is a problem. Much discussion on a pro-active cooperative appeal to the public (public outreach), which will accompany any action that takes place.
  - Management actions might be relaxed or changed as the run progresses and depending on BTF numbers. Stocks in these rivers will be monitored to see if the actions are having an effect on escapement.
- [Proposed Management Action Options for Lower Kuskokwim River Tributary Chinook Conservation](#) (See individual motions below for KRSMWG chosen options and ADF&G and USFWS preferences):
    - The Division of Sport Fish and the Commercial Fisheries Division, in conjunction with USFWS, are responsible for implementing any closures.
    - All options presented at the KRSMWG meeting were discussed within legal parameters that both state and federal agencies could adhere to.
    - Options were ranked in order of achieving the objective of addressing conservation.
    - The agencies' preferred options are noted with each motion.

#### WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

- 1.) [Headwater Subsistence members](#): Daniel Esai will be primary member for Headwater Subsistence and Nick Petruska will be the alternate. Motion passed, unanimous (12 Yeas, 0 Nays).
- 2.) [Tuluksak Motion](#): Recommend the following Preseason restrictions for the Tuluksak River for conservation of Chinook.
 

Area defined as: All waters of the Tuluksak River, to the southern point of the island immediately west of where the Tuluksak River meets the Kuskokwim River mainstem. A buffer was discussed but not officially defined (to be decided later). Motion passed, unanimous (10 Yeas, 0 Nays):

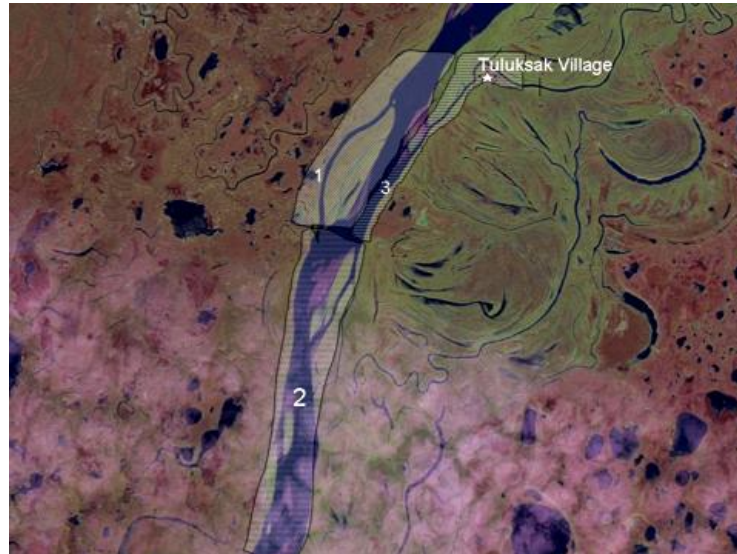
  - a. Sport Fishery – Closed to all Chinook salmon directed effort through the current regulatory closure of sport fishing harvest of Chinook salmon to July 25.
  - b. Subsistence Fishery – Allow 4" mesh gillnets. Allow rod and reel harvest of non-Chinook species.

ADF&G & USFWS preferred option differs from KRSMWG recommendation only for section b. above, which states:  
 Subsistence Fishery – Closed to subsistence fishing. This includes all gillnet mesh sizes and rod and reel directed Chinook salmon fishing.

- The KRSMWG thus chose an option that was slightly less restrictive and allows 4" gillnets and rod and reel for non-Chinook species in the subsistence fishery.

#### COMMENTS for Tuluksak Motion:

- Downriver elder agrees with the closures and says that they need to use a geographic point that local people know because a marker can be moved. Much discussion regarding the boundaries followed.
- ADF&G clarified the description of the final motion passed to be, "the upstream side of Mishevik Slough across to bottom of island that cuts across on east bank."



- USFWS explained that closing the Tuluksak River alone would not be enough, especially since a growing sandbar creates a funnel of fish at the mouth and nets could easily be set there. YK Delta RAC member agreed, saying that the shore is deep and that's where the salmon hang out.
- USFWS said that 70% of the Tuluksak subsistence harvest occurs in zone 2 (see map above), which is downriver of where the closure would be. Only 8% of the community fish in zone 3.
- YK Delta RAC member thought that the head of Mishevik Slough was an ideal place for a river-wide marker. Western Interior RAC member commented that it is better if people are fishing in zone 2 where stock is mixed, and that zone 1 should be closed because all those fish are headed upriver. He also said that a river-wide closure would be better because tides move boats, which can't be controlled.
- Sport fish member stressed the importance of public outreach to prevent public outcry. ADF&G reassured her that an outreach plan comes with any closures for these communities, and more public knowledge results in fewer tickets. Downriver elder commented that it is especially important to notify the older folks ahead of time to make sure they understand and can adjust to the change.
- It was clarified that for any closures, it is anticipated that ADF&G will take the actions and USFWS will adopt them.

3.) [Kwethluk, Kisaralik, and Kasigluk Motion](#): Recommend the following preseason restrictions for the Kwethluk, Kisaralik, and Kasigluk Rivers (see below) for Chinook conservation. Motion passed, unanimous (11 Yeas, 0 Nays).

- Area defined as: All waters of the Kwethluk, Kisaralik, and Kasigluk Rivers to the confluence with Kuskokuak slough, including the “old” Kuskokuak slough channel.
- a. Sport Fishery – Closed to all Chinook salmon directed effort through the current regulatory closure of sport fishing harvest of Chinook salmon to July 25.
- b. Subsistence Fishery – Allow 4” mesh gillnets. Allow rod and reel harvest of non-Chinook species.

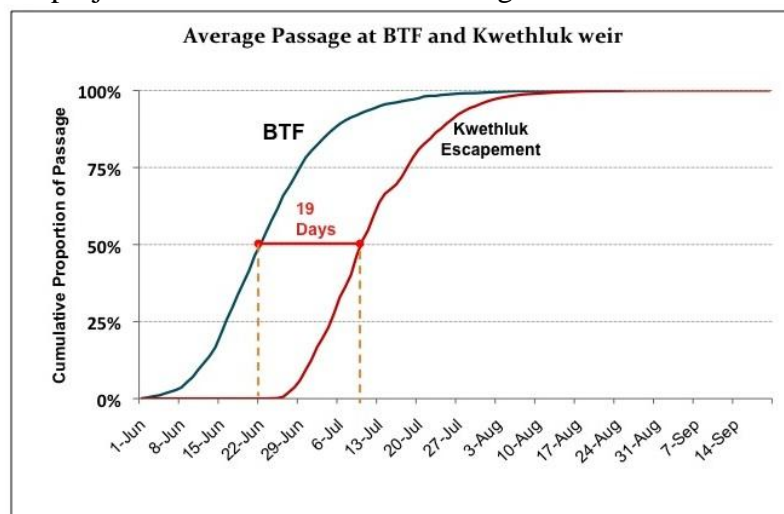
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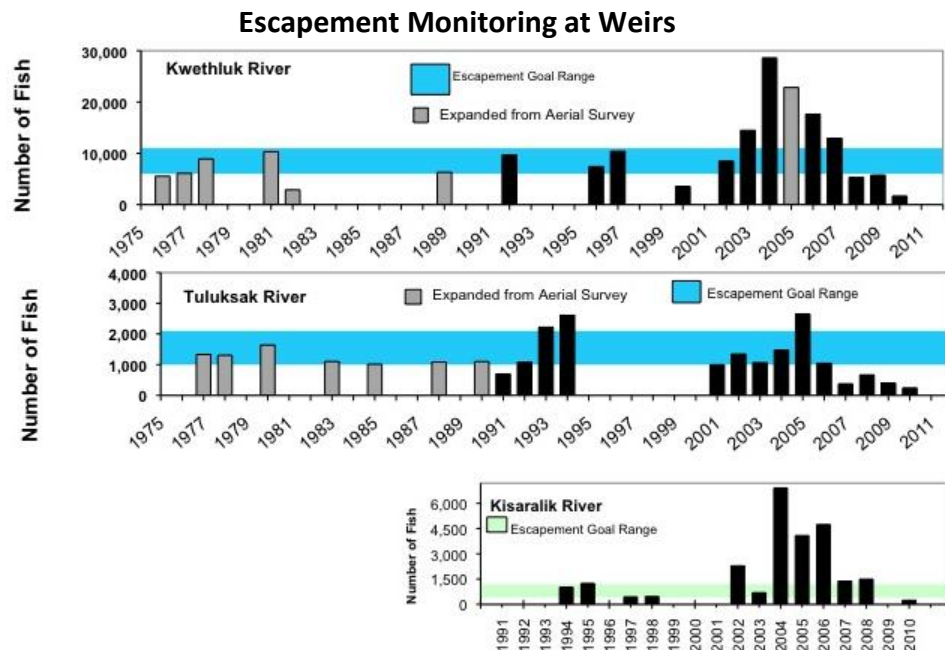
#### [COMMENTS for Kwethluk, Kisaralik and Kasigluk Motion](#):

- ADF&G addressed why these three rivers are grouped together. Data from the interagency meeting showed that they have escapement relationships. Another reason is to avoid the shift of fishing effort from one system to another nearby system.
- The Kwethluk Weir’s mid-point passage is a good indicator of run strength, but it takes the fish about 19 days to get there from Bethel. Using the adjusted BTF CPUE, run strength can be projected two weeks before arriving at the Kwethluk Weir.



- ADF&G showed how the Kwethluk escapement of 1,669 Chinook in 2010 was lowest on record, and was the third year it did not meet escapement goals. The Tuluksak escapement of 239 Chinook was also the lowest on record, and the fourth year it did not meet escapement goals. The 2010 Kisaralik aerial index count of 235 Chinook (with fair

surveying conditions) was the lowest recorded, and was below the escapement goal of 400 to 1,200 Chinook salmon (this SEG established by ADF&G in 2005).



- As an action item, the KRSMWG would like to see more information regarding the quality of escapement at weir projects. USFWS commented that we need to watch the quality of escapement through the weirs. He suggested that escapement goals may need to be revisited so that the Chinook do not get smaller and smaller, because jacks do not contribute as much to spawning. ADF&G commented that a healthy population is comprised of a variety of ages, and age class proportions change over time.
- John Andrew shared the recommendations and concerns of the Kwethluk Tribal Council:
  - *The following are recommended actions, or actions Kwethluk could support:*
    - Closing all sport fishing and rod and reel subsistence fishing until the end of July
    - No chum or king set nets allowed in the river or at the mouth of the river, only 4" mesh
    - To collaborate with ADF&G and USFWS because last year that worked well. There was some resistance but the majority of fishers went along with it.
  - *The following are concerns of the Kwethluk Tribal Council:*
    - The mouths of these rivers have shifted.
    - For the last 5 years, the water has been extremely low.
    - Beavers are destroying spawning grounds with their dams on small creeks.
- Sport fish member stressed the importance of reminding sport fishermen that they can't target Chinook. She also said that she wouldn't be comfortable with restrictions on other species. ADF&G replied that other species couldn't be restricted because there is no conservation concern.



- Middle River Subsistence member asked if there is data on how many people subsistence fish on the Kisaralik, Kwethluk and Kasigluk rivers. USFWS responded no, and that OSM funded subsistence harvest research on the Tuluksak specifically because of concern regarding the size of females. USFWS agreed that this type of data would be useful in the future.
- ADF&G explained that most of the fishing activity occurs just downstream of the Kasigluk and downstream of the Kisaralik, so if just the area at the confluence is closed the issue of people coming out of Bethel and setting nets to target fish destined specifically for those tributaries won't be addressed.
- Western Interior RAC member expressed concern regarding Chinook bycatch. ADF&G clarified that for incidental harvested Chinook, subsistence fishers may keep them and sport fishers must let them go unharmed.

4.) [Kuskokuak Slough Motion](#): Recommend preseason restrictions for Kuskokuak Slough waters (see below) for Chinook conservation actions. Motion passed, unanimous (10 Yeas, 0 Nays).

Area defined as: All waters of Kuskokuak Slough between ADFG commercial fishing markers, and including waters of the "old Kuskokuak slough."

- a. Sport Fishery – Closed to all Chinook salmon directed effort through the current regulatory closure of sport fishing harvest of Chinook salmon to July 25.
- b. Subsistence Fishery – Allow 4" mesh gillnets. Allow rod and reel harvest of non-Chinook species.

ADF&G & USFWS preferred option differs from KRSMWG recommendation only for section b. above, which states:

Subsistence Fishery – Closed to subsistence fishing. This includes all gillnet mesh sizes and rod and reel directed Chinook salmon fishing.

- The KRSMWG thus chose an option that was slightly less restrictive and allows 4" gillnets and rod and reel for non-Chinook species in the subsistence fishery.

#### [COMMENTS for Kuskokuak Slough Motion](#):

- ADF&G explained that the purpose of the Kuskokuak Slough closure would be to minimize harvest of bank-oriented fish destined for Kwethluk, Kasigluk, and Kisaralik. The area defined is from the top of slough all the way down to where the commercial closure begins.
- Sport fish member requested John Andrew's input regarding the percent of people from Kwethluk that subsistence fish for Chinook on the slough. He responded that he didn't think that they would accept closures because they would have to go out to the main Kuskokwim, and then have to deal with all the Akiachak and Akiak fishers. Also, people who don't have the horsepower fish close to the village. ADF&G pointed out that if the area above Kwethluk was not closed and people could fish there because it is close to the village, then they would be targeting the fish bound for the tributaries we're concerned about. USFWS agreed that even though it is hard for people without horsepower, it would be most effective to close the entire slough.
- John Andrew would not speak for Akiak or Akiachak regarding the motion, because they have set nets below the Kisaralik.

- Sport fish member recalled the poor numbers of escapement and encouraged closure of the whole slough.
- Regarding mesh size and effectiveness of catching Chinook, ADF&G Area Manager stated that 6" gear does still catch Chinook and that in the BTF the 5 3/8" gear catches more Chinook than 8." If 6" mesh were allowed, it may not reduce the harvest of Chinook salmon. Eva Patton with ONC agreed because subsistence fishermen report catching more Chinook in 6" mesh. Western Interior RAC member said that 6" mesh also could kill larger Chinook that get gilled but then fall out of the nets.

5.) [Lower Mainstem Kuskokwim River Motion:](#) Recommend restriction for lower mainstem Kuskokwim subsistence fishery (see below), for Chinook conservation. Motion passed, unanimous (10 Yeas, 0 Nays).

- Area defined as: All waters within the W-1 commercial fishing District.
  - a. Start season with no restriction.
  - b. If projected to not meet Kuskokwim River tributary escapement goals, move to windows subsistence fishing schedule.
- This was ADF&G and USFWS agency-preferred option.

#### [COMMENTS for Mainstem Kuskokwim River:](#)

- ADF&G stated the following regarding the restrictions on the Kuskokwim River:
  - If we close the mainstem Kuskokwim subsistence fishery pre-season, we would lose the ability to track the relative run abundance because the BTF index project occurs upriver from much of the harvest. If that harvest was decreased, the BTF CPUES would be much higher and would not be comparable to previous years when subsistence harvest was occurring without closures.
  - ADF&G stated that using BTF, we can monitor passage of Chinook salmon past Bethel, and that BTF is a good indicator of run strength to the Kwethluk River. BTF is also a good indicator of run strength for all other escapement projects combined, and as such is a good indicator of Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon run strength.
  - Run timing of Lower Kuskokwim River tributary Chinook salmon is not well documented. However, there is a general trend for upriver stocks to travel past Kalskag earlier than stocks bound for middle river tributaries. If this trend holds true into the lower Kuskokwim River tributaries, then the timing through the Bethel area may be towards the end of the run, and harvest shifted later in the run may target the stocks bound for lower tributaries that we are trying to bolster.
- Sport fish member commented that the majority of subsistence fishing in Bethel occurs after June 13, usually June 13-15. Eva Patton with ONC agreed that most people fish the last two weeks of June and the first week of July. Lower River Subsistence member commented that people don't bother to go to fish camp until the fish come, and members agreed that because of the price of gas most people wait until a pulse comes. ADF&G commented that if the Kwethluk weir starts June 29<sup>th</sup>, then we have to remember that those fish are getting to Bethel sooner than that, which is the time period to consider conserving fish.
- Western Interior RAC member commented that we need to remember upstream stocks, because they will be fished all the way through. He urged that some action be taken in



the future for upriver-bound Chinook. ADF&G responded that there is not enough genetic separation and therefore it is impossible to manage based on mixed stocks.

- Upriver Subsistence member commented that last year her family caught only 6 kings to feed 25 people, which were all small and male. She says that they are getting less and less every year, and is very concerned about subsistence harvests upriver. ADF&G clarified that the area of possible mainstem restrictions is defined as the W-1 commercial fishing zone, with possibly no restrictions above W-1. It is noted that the level of harvest downriver decreases the density of fish as they come upriver and makes it more difficult for people in the middle and upper river areas to catch fish.
- Downriver Elder asked what was wrong with the window closures used at the beginning of June in 2000 and 2001. ADF&G responded that when windows were implemented, the level of harvest did not decrease because people just fished harder during the windows. It was further clarified that the original intent of the windows when implemented was not to reduce harvest, but to spread the harvest out throughout the run.
- Much clarification occurred, but ADF&G and USFWS stated that 35,000 *more* fish than last year need to get past the mainstem subsistence fishery in order to get enough fish up to the Kwethluk to meet escapement. The consensus between the agencies was that without closures on the lower river, necessary savings may not occur.
- Members asked how many Chinook were harvested in the commercial fishery in 2010, and ADF&G responded about 3,700 fish.
- Sport fish member asked if having windows until June 15<sup>th</sup> would work, if the [hypothetical] trigger point for assessing the run is June 11. ADF&G replied that different stocks overlap, even though they come in at different times. BTF can be used to assess the run. Since the bulk of the run occurs during the last two weeks of June, this is when windows would probably take place. Sport fish member then expressed concern that people might go out the first week of June if there will be closures later in the month.
- Downriver Elder inquired about changing the times of windows. For example, change closures to weekends when people who can afford to buy food from the store are working.
- Sport fish member commented that people would be more receptive to closures if we start the season without restrictions.
- Downriver Elder reminded ADF&G that people need to know ahead of time because the run times vary so much from year to year.
- Co-chair commented, “it is good to not to have fear get to you too early, but trends really seem to look downhill.” He was referring to restricting pre-season because of the fear of low escapement. Co-chair is hoping that total river closures would finally help upriver, because upriver has been dealing with low escapement for years. He is happy that this issue has finally gotten the lower river’s attention.
- YK Delta RAC member asked if Chinook harvest needs were met when windows were implemented in previous years, when the windows were 4 days open and 3 days closed. ADF&G responded that the original intention was not to limit the harvest, but to spread out the run so that the large females got upriver. Also, closures were implemented at a time when the runs were beginning to rebound after being very low (so their effectiveness may not compare to what we would see now when the run abundance is low). ADF&G biometrician stated that, in order to be effective, closures should be longer (i.e. fishing closed for 4 days, open for three, and possibly closed on weekends) in order to reduce

harvest. Window length, when windows are in place and how they are implemented in areas along the river are important factors to consider.

- YK Delta RAC member stated that in previous years when the scheduled closures were in place, upriver fishermen didn't always know when they could and couldn't fish. Whatever system is used needs to be clear to the fishermen, with good public outreach.
- Upriver Subsistence member suggested that this issue should be brought to the Seven Generations Training because all villages have an ICAP person, who could potentially help facilitate public outreach.

6.) [Federally Qualified Users Motion:](#) Recommend that Chinook harvest in the Kuskokwim is limited to federally qualified users only in 2011. Motion passed (9 Yeas, 1 Nay).

- *Federally qualified users defined as:* Residents of the Kuskokwim area, except residents of military installations.
- Action would only take place in areas with federal jurisdiction, such as the Yukon Delta Wildlife Refuge (i.e. no areas above Aniak would be included in this action).

[COMMENTS for Federally Qualified Users Motion:](#)

- USFWS clarified the effects of the recommended motion: A non-Kuskokwim resident could not drive the fishing boat or handle the net (they can't be actively involved with the physical harvest). Processing the fish afterwards and being a passenger in the boat would be allowed. A non-resident of the Kuskokwim could still take a share of the harvest, but the motion would restrict the ability of someone without family or other contacts on the river to come and take fish. People who come across from the Yukon to fish could be affected. ADF&G pointed out that non-Kuskokwim residents could still fish above Aniak, because that area is outside the refuge jurisdiction.
- USFWS reminded that this would be a "blunt tool" and to consider the effect of limiting people in areas where there are no escapement problems. ADF&G commented that the state and federal agencies have different definitions of subsistence users, and to make sure to consider the effect of this recommendation because both agencies have to manage the river together. YK Delta RAC member asked if the Working Group has to go with the state's definition of subsistence users because they are a state-sanctioned agency, and ADF&G replied yes. Sport fish member thought it would be better not to complicate things by introducing a law like this.
- ADF&G asked if this motion would even have a conservation effect, since many people have families on the Kuskokwim. Sport fish member replied that it would be easier to tell non-Kuskokwim residents not to come for fishing if this law passes.

7.) [Special Action Request motion:](#) Expedite state and federal agencies to get information on the implementation of a reporting system of salmon shipped out of the Kuskokwim area (all salmon species). Motion passed, unanimous (10 Yeas, 0 Nays).

8.) [Confirming Chairs motion:](#) Motion to re-confirm the three current chairs: Lamont Albertson, Beverly Hoffman, and Greg Roczicka. Motion passed, unanimous (11 Yeas, 0 Nays).

**\*Note:** Processor left mid-meeting, and ADFG area manager abstains from votes regarding the fishery, which explains the difference in total number of votes.

### OTHER COMMENTS:

- Processor asked if the reason for delaying the harvest is to help the Chinook run. He clarified with ADF&G that commercial processors take a very small percentage of Chinook, as opposed to subsistence. ADF&G agreed and stated, “The reason for the delay is the low abundance of Chinook salmon, because our primary objective is to meet escapement goals.” Chuck Brazil with ADF&G already talked to the two processors and they are both in agreement with him. He reiterated that Chinook are an incidental harvest; the primary markets are for chum and sockeye. Processor alternate member agreed, and said that last year Kuskokwim Seafoods got very few Chinook.
- Processor asked when chums start running. ADF&G replied the third week of June, but we won’t be fishing until July if there is a commercial fishery, which will be about at the 30% point of the chum run.
- Sport fish member commented that, after looking at all that data in the interagency meeting, she is happy that ADF&G is being conservative regarding commercial fishing and taking a proactive approach to the situation. Lower River subsistence member asked what are the chances of commercial fishing being implemented sooner than July. ADF&G responded that BTF data has to be evaluated daily in order to determine the strength of the run.
- There was much discussion about sport fishing, especially near Aniak.
  - Co-Chair wanted to make sure that the state and federal agencies were “on the same page” and had the same regulations regarding enforcement of sport fishing. Both ADF&G and USFWS replied that yes, the rules are the same for both agencies, and during Chinook closures sport fishers are not allowed to target Chinook.
  - Co-chair expressed concern about sport fishing on the Nushagak River because many clients and guides there are not Alaska residents. ADF&G responded that sport fishers and guides have a management plan in place that they have to adhere to. ADF&G member could not comment about the effectiveness of this plan because the Nushagak is outside of his management area.
  - Members expressed concern about sport fishers targeting large salmon in the Aniak River. Co-chair stressed, “One salmon who has gotten all the way up there and going through the spawning process is worth 50 down at the mouth of the river.” Middle River Subsistence Member said that last year an elder in Aniak complained about a sport fishing guide setting nets by subsistence fishers on the main Kuskokwim. Multiple members requested that USFWS bring more enforcement to the area.
  - Western Interior RAC member suggested that instead of making the sport fish guides responsible, change the permitting. ADFG said that type of change would have to go to the Board of Fish.
- Downriver Elder suggested that the KRSMWG needs a Primary member from the tundra because representation is missing from some places. Other members pointed out that there is fairly even representation, with five upriver and five downriver members, with Kalskag in the middle. ADF&G suggested that we should wait until we have volunteers for the position, since it is hard to fill vacant positions, to get involvement in general, and that it can be difficult to get a quorum sometimes.

- YK Delta RAC member also noted the vacancy of the Upriver Elder position. Upriver Subsistence member commented that she had someone in mind from Stony River, but the individual is tentative about using the teleconference and would be more comfortable meeting in person. Some members commented on the Bush Tel service not working, and others prefer teleconferences because they do not have to travel.
- Sport Fish member suggested that John Andrew and someone from Tuluksak should be involved in the Working Group. Eva Patton with ONC commented that funding is needed to fly people from Tuluksak to meetings.
- Sport Fish member wants to do community outreach as soon as possible, and encouraged all members to step up as community leaders. For example, multiple members could call into a radio show. ADFG stated that the Working Group will have to take the action for outreach, since the Working Group Coordinator doesn't have sufficient time or resources, and often, the message is best delivered coming from community members rather than state agency staff.
- Downriver Elder spoke regarding the decline of Chinook. One factor could be Chinook by-catch. The water level has also been down, which prevents fish from reaching spawning grounds. He urges us to work together, and is happy that the state, federal government, and villages work together and don't fight over the resource. Traditional belief is that when there is fighting over the resource, it won't come back.
- Commercial Fisher is concerned about the pike in the Kanektok River because they eat anything, and asked if there are any current studies about this. ADF&G responded that the increase in pike could be naturally occurring. Since the Commercial Fisheries Division does not manage this species, Sport Fish would need to provide the research. Pike are very resilient and can migrate through different levels of salinity. The Chair mentioned that pike are also present in the Aniak River. Commercial Fisher also concerned about tags and is concerned that Kuskokwim fish are getting caught in the Kanektok, ADF&G replied that yes, they are, but is unquantified.
- Member at Large commented that the KRSMWG needs to inform areas of the river about the decline of fish, especially Chinook, because these interagency meetings are very informative. He is also worried about the decline of blackfish. He also asked about the effect of beaver dams because when the dams are naturally broken in the spring the beaver repairs them, but when people cut the dam many whitefish come out. ADF&G responded that whitefish spawn in the mainstem river, use ponds as summer rearing habitats, then go back out to the river in the fall if possible. Beavers can have a positive and negative effect on the fish, but it is all a balance. ADF&G asked if people were catching the whitefish or letting them go when they broke the dams, and Member at Large said that they do both.
- YK Delta RAC member said that they have been having trouble getting people to come to the Working Group meetings. He commented that the KRSMWG has come a long way and has seen so much good change, because the main objective has been, "What are we going to do to restore our king salmon?" He stressed the importance of somehow finding a way to bring our salmon back.
- Downriver Elder expressed gratitude because he always learns a lot at the meetings, there is not fighting like before, and he likes how everyone works together. Headwater Subsistence member Daniel Esai agreed that we have a good group that can accomplish something.

- Upriver Subsistence member commented, “The river defines everything that we are. Unless we instill the importance of it to ourselves and our children, we will be without.”
- ADF&G commented that these agencies and the KRSMWG have made tremendous success in Chinook management. The management has been a collaborative effort and we should all be proud.
- Headwaters Subsistence member brought recognition to Western Interior RAC member Ray Collins, for he and his wife have been made Honorary Tribal Members from the village of Nikolai. Ray and his wife been given the names “People who are strong for our people.”
- ADF&G employee Doug Molyneaux has retired. Members of the Working Group and the audience expressed gratitude towards Doug for his years of dedication and work on the Kuskokwim.
  - Middle River Subsistence member Angela Morgan noted that much work and good information was put into the meeting. She wanted to thank Doug Molyneaux for his help getting the Aniak Sonar and Georgetown Weir projects going, so we can have access to that data.
  - Sport fish member Beverly Hoffman will miss Doug and hopes that he will stay involved, and she hopes he knows how much his peers respect him. She wanted to thank the agencies for providing such up-to-date information, and agrees that we can work together for the common good of the River.
  - Western Interior RAC member Ray Collins stated that Doug Molyneaux’s legacy is the Working Group, which has been such an important educational tool.
  - Lower River Subsistence member Greg Roczicka said that he will miss Doug.

#### WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE

| MEMBER                          | NAME                              | OTHER  |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Upriver Elder</b>            | VACANT                            | Kevin Schaberg, ADF&G                            |
| <b>Downriver Elder</b>          | James Charles, Chuck Chaliak      | Holly Carroll, ADF&G                             |
| <b>Commercial Fisher</b>        | Charlie Brown                     | Alice Bailey, ADF&G                              |
| <b>Lower River Subsistence</b>  | Greg Roczicka                     | Dan Gillikin, USFWS                              |
| <b>Middle River Subsistence</b> | Angela Morgan                     | Zach Liller, ADF&G                               |
| <b>Upper River Subsistence</b>  | Evelyn Thomas                     | Josh Clark, ADF&G                                |
| <b>Headwaters Subsistence</b>   | Daniel Esai                       | Chris Shelden, ADF&G                             |
| <b>Processor</b>                | Allen Hepler (Kuskokwim Seafoods) | Travis Elison, ADF&G                             |
| <b>Member at Large</b>          | Henry Lupie                       | Steve Miller, USFWS                              |
| <b>Sport Fisher</b>             | Beverly Hoffman                   | Ken Harper, USFWS                                |
| <b>Western Interior RAC</b>     | Ray Collins                       | Doug Molyneaux, ADF&G                            |
| <b>Y-K Delta RAC</b>            | Bob Aloysius                      | Dan Bergstrom, ADF&G                             |
| <b>ADF&amp;G</b>                | Chuck Brazil                      | Carl Berger, Lower Kuskokwim<br>Economic Council |
| <b>Chair</b>                    | Lamont Albertson                  |  |
|                                 |                                   | Don Rivard, USFWS                                |
|                                 |                                   | Aaron Moses, USFWS                               |
|                                 |                                   | Doug Bue, ADF&G                                  |
|                                 |                                   | Tracy Hanson, ADF&G                              |
|                                 |                                   | Janet Bavilla, ADF&G                             |
|                                 |                                   | John Chythlook, ADF&G                            |
|                                 |                                   | Eva Patton, ONC                                  |
|                                 |                                   | John Andrew, Kwethluk                            |

|  |  |                        |
|--|--|------------------------|
|  |  | Robert Sundown, USFWS  |
|  |  | Rod Campbell, USFWS    |
|  |  | Gene Peltola, USFWS    |
|  |  | Naomi Brodersen, ADF&G |

**GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS:**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G**), Orutsararmiut Native Council (**ONC**), Kuskokwim Native Association (**KNA**), Association of Village Council Presidents (**AVCP**), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (**USFWS**), Bethel Test Fishery project (**BTF**), Catch Per Unit Effort (**CPUE**), Coastal Village Seafoods (**CVS**), ADF&G Commercial Fisheries Division (**CF**), ADF&G Sport Fisheries Division (**SF**), Regional Advisory Council (**RAC**), Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (**KRSMWG or Working Group**), Sustainable Escapement Goal (**SEG**), Biological Escapement Goal (**BEG**).